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*RATIONAL MYSTICISM AND NEW TESTAMENT
CHRISTIANITY*

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I

To the very title of this paper, or at any rate to the idea implied in it, the average religious thinker might conceivably make more objections than one. He might in the first place inquire whether any meaning can be found in the term "rational mysticism"; and, examining it either from the standpoint of reason or from that of mysticism, might complain that it attempts to bring together two quite incompatible things. Reason has usually held mysticism in scorn, looking upon it as a sort of quack method, if the word may pass, of accomplishing, or of pretending to accomplish, what reason accomplishes in the professional and only legitimate way. Mysticism, from the other side, has been ready enough to repay scorn with scorn: it has claimed to find its way to the secret places of truth by a subtle process far more efficacious than that laborious following of the trail which reason practises; and its independence of reason, its irreconcilability with reason, it has always taken as its glory rather than its shame. What—the average religious man might say—what can "rational mysticism" mean? How, indeed, can such a thing exist at all? And in the next place, even supposing you could manufacture the curious compound that "rational mysticism" would be, and could link the two seeming incompatibles together, how are you going to make any connection between your newly created rational mysticism and New Testament Christianity? Rational, indeed, New Testament Christianity is, or claims to be; and to show its harmony with reason (provided that the thing be not pushed too far) is one of the chief objects that Christian apologetics may well keep in view. But the line of mysticism has commonly been held as being to a considerable extent di-

vorced from the New Testament line. Mysticism has not run, for instance (so it has been said), upon the most prominent lines of Pauline experience and Pauline teaching; its language has not, as a rule, echoed the language in which most students have embodied the results of their investigation into the New Testament system; the processes and programmes of the soul, so to call them, which it has advocated have scarcely run parallel with those on which the New Testament appears to lay the principal stress; nor do the great ideas of sin and salvation and faith, which are the fixed and shining ideas of New Testament Christianity, occupy in the mystical system the central place. What connection can there be between mysticism, rational or otherwise, and the Christianity which, according to the consensus of testimony through the Christian ages, the pages of the New Testament enshrine? The average religious thinker might well suppose that in attempting to bring together "rational mysticism" and "New Testament Christianity" one is attempting to make a series of reconciliations among things that can only look at one another askance, and beating oneself vainly against an impossible task.

And yet that the linking of the three things—mysticism, reason, and the New Testament conception of Christianity—that the linking of the three would, if we could but accomplish it, be most welcome, probably no one would deny. The religious man, though he may think himself to have perceived certain possible ways of reconciliation between reason and the Christian religion as he finds it in the New Testament, and on that point may be satisfied, is conscious that something is lacking still. "Wanting is what?" Mysticism assuredly has a not quite negligible answer to give. That warmth—that sense of immediate contact with a higher world and a higher life—that immersion of the whole personality in the eternal tides—that lifting of the entire inner experience away from the level of problem and solution, of seeking and finding, of painful self-adjustment to spiritual facts and forces which seem, when all is said, to be half-hidden as behind a veil—that sublime ecstasy in which the soul no longer possesses its religion, its Christ, its God, but is possessed by them, enveloped in them, conscious not so much

of any relation between itself and them as of a penetration of itself by them through and through,—these things, which are the things for which mysticism stands and whereof it speaks, would be for the ordinary religious man his religion's perfecting and crown. That he knows. Mysticism may have given up some of the things he has; but it has seized upon a great many things he has not. It may appear to have shifted, as to its standing-ground, away from the fundamentals; but somehow or other it contrives to stretch itself into a sun-bathed atmosphere into which he, with his feet never so firmly planted, cannot lift his head. It may not be an altogether safe guide, and in the programmes it issues may slur over some of the first essential steps of the sacred way; but it speaks as from a fair land whose entrance-gate all would rejoice to find. If, now, the average religious man could but keep what he has, his own grip upon the primary factors of the religious life, his own seriousness in face of the tremendous import of the fundamental facts concerning God and man and sin and redemption, and yet add on to that the glow and color and thrill of the mystical experience, what great gain it would be! His customary religion, partly through its emphasis, its right and proper emphasis, upon the relations between himself and God and upon the necessity for their adjustment, leaves him too conscious of his separateness, of the hard outlines of his own personality as distinct from the eternal life he wants to make his own; and even though he may sometimes, in hours of kindled emotion, become thrilled with joy *about* his religion and the benefits it brings, that, he knows, is not the ultimate joy. If he could, while not losing that sense of separateness of his, add on to it a sense of oneness—if he could be, not only reconciled to God, but one with God—if the realization of that seeming paradox were found to be possible—then the ultimate joy would be attained. To find some method of adhering to the fundamental conceptions of New Testament Christianity, and at the same time possessing the experience which the mystics of history claim for their own—this would be, for every man of earnest religious thought and serious religious purpose, a delight indeed.

Perhaps an endeavor to apprehend the true significance and secret of mysticism may at any rate start us toward the desired

goal. For it may be that those who have entered into the mystical experience have not always given a quite accurate account of the experience they enjoy; and a revision of the account (which of course implies no questioning or suspicion of the experience itself) may enable us to see that mysticism has no quarrel with reason after all. And further, this same revision of mysticism's account of itself may bring mysticism into much closer relations with New Testament Christianity than those in which it usually seems to stand—partly by making clearer what mysticism in its essence really is, and partly by a sudden flashing of light upon our conceptions of New Testament Christianity, showing us how those conceptions need to be deepened and enlarged, and how in that deepening and enlarging they come nearer to mysticism's line. And obviously, if mysticism has already appeared to be reasonable, then to move New Testament Christianity nearer to mysticism is necessarily to move it nearer to reason too. Thus, by bringing mysticism into contact, first with reason and then with New Testament religion, and consequently bringing reason and New Testament religion into closer mutual contact in their turn, we may find that in speaking of "rational mysticism and New Testament Christianity" we are venturing upon no union of incompatibles after all.

II

Undoubtedly mysticism has been right in declaring that religion is ultimately and essentially a losing of self in God—that the significance of religion is not exhausted in any grasp which the mind may fling round facts about God, nor in any adjustment of an external kind which a man may make in his attitude towards God, nor in any change in man's judicial standing before the sight of God, but is a far deeper thing. That recognition, already referred to, of a valuable and desirable element in mystical experience—that recognition which practically all men, though they may sheer off from and think extravagant much of the language in which mysticism expresses or expounds itself, are ready to make—is itself strong testimony to mysticism's nearness to the heart of the whole thing. Indeed, all really re-

ligious men would, if brought to the point, make two admissions. They would admit, on the one hand, that if religion calls for anything at all, it calls for much more than a merely external relationship between man and God, however many faculties of human nature that relationship may cover, and however carefully that relationship may be maintained and cultivated once it is made. And they would admit, on the other hand, that if those instincts of our nature which seem to cry for something outside of ourselves on which they may take hold and in whose answering clasp they may find their complement—those aspirations and variously named (or unnamed) movements which so often go forth from the busy harbor of our inner life as if outward bound upon an unknown sea—that if all these may be legitimately interpreted in a religious sense at all, it is to something like real and intimate union with God that they point. Mysticism, in speaking of losing self in God, is true to our ultimate interpretation of religion and true to our ultimate interpretation of ourselves.

But, under the taunt which cold reason so frequently levels against it, mysticism has permitted itself to be caught in a false antithesis, and has mistakenly accepted as inevitable that hostility between itself and reason which reason has sought to force. "This intimate relation between man and God of which you speak"—so reason's complaint has run—"and this knowledge of God which, as you claim, results from that intimate relation, are not facts discoverable or provable by any instruments at my command. The existence of such a relation and of such knowledge cannot be inferred from any premises that lie before my eyes. In asserting it, therefore, you declare yourself more powerful than I am in my own particular field, come in as a sort of confident but unauthorized amateur where the regular practitioner confesses himself baffled, and set up a preposterous claim which I cannot for a moment allow." Mysticism's mistake has been that it has so frequently answered taunt with taunt, and in its indignation has missed the right reply. "Yes," it has answered, "I do take your place in this department, and perform what you cannot accomplish. They who would penetrate the secrets behind the veil must substitute my guidance for yours." In reply to

reason's attempt to rule mysticism out, mysticism has attempted to rule reason out in its turn: it has willingly occupied the false position into which reason has been eager to thrust it, and, as previously suggested, has given a wrong account of itself and of its rôle. What the true answer of mysticism to the taunt flung at it by reason would have been—the answer by the making of which mysticism would have robbed reason of its arms—we shall presently come to understand. For the moment it may suffice to say that mysticism, rightly interpreted, does not take the place of reason at all; and it is on some such line as this that mysticism should have replied when reason complained or sneered, so repudiating the alternative—as between mysticism or reason—which reason has assiduously pushed to the front. By failing to take this line—by foolishly lifting the gage which reason throws down and by entering into the conflict on reason's own ground—by letting itself be drawn into a wholly unnecessary battle—mysticism loses its opportunity, and becomes discredited in a court where a verdict might easily be won.

For mysticism is not, except incidentally, a matter of knowledge. It is a matter of something else and of something more. What mysticism really aims at, and what mysticism has really reached more or less perfectly in the experience of those who are entitled to the mystic's name, is the acceptance of God by man as the actual, energizing, dynamic source of all that man is—man setting himself in such a God-ward relation that henceforth he is, in regard to all that proceeds from him in the way of activity, emotion, and the rest, mediate instead of immediate, a channel instead of a spring. Mysticism aims at the substitution of God's initiative for man's within man's own personality—except, of course, that the initiative of surrender, the initiative in giving up initiative, must on man's part be ceaselessly maintained. Mysticism aims at using the separateness of man's personality only to secure a unity of man's personality with God's—a unity in which man, so far as he is conscious of his own personality at all, is conscious of it only as a thing that has abrogated all its powers save the power of self-abandonment, and that sleeps. It is more than a relation between man and God: it is a relation wherein there is no more *between*: ay, it is more

than a *relation*—it is a mingling, a threading together, a lying down of the man upon God, a folding of God round every part of the man. All this is only to say in other words what has been said of themselves by the mystics of every age; and this is the experience (let their theoretical account of it be what it may) which the mystics of every age have possessed. But from the point of view of our present theme this involves a good deal. The mystical experience, read thus, is at once perceived to be not a matter of knowledge, nor a substitute for knowledge; and the effort to attain it is in no wise an effort that aims at taking reason's place. Of course, if that close fellowship between God and man, after which mysticism strives, be once established, man will necessarily know more of the God with whom he is made one; and thus, incidentally, mysticism may come, over and above being what in its own essence it is, to be a feeder and enricher of the mind. But primarily, the mystical experience is not a matter of the mind. It is not an attitude of the intellect, nor an attitude substituted for an attitude of the intellect, but an attitude of the whole nature, an attitude—or, more accurately, a movement, a development—of life. It is not a knowing God, but a climbing into God on the part of man, a descent into man on the part of God. That is to say (and this is the crucial point) the mystical experience is the emergence of a new fact, not on the stage of the mind, but on the stage of the world-process itself: its establishment indicates, not that something has been learned or recognized or understood, but that a new *event* has taken place, that the next step of the evolutionary process has been passed. In the establishment of the mystical experience life, as man has known it, moves on through the next stage, which is also the last; something happens in the cosmic order and on the cosmic scale. In the nature of the case, the new cosmic event takes place by degrees, in instalments, as it were, since the individual members of the race, in whom life as it is is embodied, ascend only separately and at too rare intervals into the mystical experience which is life as it is destined to be. But this must not blind our eyes to the fact that every single instance of a genuine mystical experience is another instalment of the one movement which life in its evolution is next called upon to make.

And if we could imagine all men entering upon the mystical experience at once, and could realize what this would imply in the way of the substitution of God's initiative for man's, we should immediately see how the establishment of any mystical experience is really an event upon the cosmic scale, the actual making of what did not exist before.

And so, once again, mysticism is not a reading of the world-process, but a contribution to it, the carrying of it on to a further stage: it is not a new apprehension of the order of the world and its relation to God; it is itself an event in that order and that relation. It is the actual making of something that did not previously exist: it is not an adjustment of relations, but the bringing to being of a new reality: it is a veritable becoming on the part of man, and, one may dare to say, a veritable becoming on the part of God, since, this union once set up, God sends himself through, beats himself out through, man, as previously he did not do. The mystical experience is a creative one, not an inferential one, or a substitute for an inferential one, at all. It is an anticipatory experience, on the part of the mystic's individual life, of that condition of things which is to be the goal of the world-process; it is, in fact, that condition of things beginning to be realized. In the mystical experience, life, and all that led up to it, gives itself up once more to the God from whom it came; and God takes into himself once more the life, with all that led up to it, to which he gave birth. It is the process of things which has been brought up, may one say, to its semi-final stage in the personality of man, now seeking and finding its goal, accomplishing the last stage of all, linking itself up with the personality of God, whence it originally set out, and so making itself rounded and complete. And the answer of mysticism, when reason taunts it with an endeavor to supplant reason in reason's own particular sphere, should run something like this: "I do not take your place nor claim to do your work. You search out what is. I make something that hitherto has not been. My part is not to know, but to create. I bring into the system of things a new fact, on which, once I have brought it in, you may work, if you can and will, in perfect consistency with the method on which you have worked

before. I, at any rate, shall not seek to prevent you. There need be no quarrel between us. You expound the order of things. I supply a new element to the order of things. You say that you have no previous knowledge of all these things whereof I speak. Of course not. Until I call them into being, they are not there for you to know. But that is precisely what I do. In this mingling of God with man which I aim at and in part bring about, I conduct the order of things a step nearer to its goal."

III

Does this conception of mysticism assist us in bringing reason and mysticism nearer together? At first it may but seem to thrust them further apart. Yet it is in thus realizing the part it plays as a part which is not reason's part nor a substitute for reason's part—in thus drawing away from reason—that mysticism comes back into a true and harmonious relation with reason again.

The mystical experience, we have seen, is not in strictness a matter of knowledge, of apprehension; it is a becoming, a veritable act, the final stage in the movement of things working itself out. It is the penultimate passing into the ultimate,—the end, so far as it has hitherto been reached, linking itself back to and up with the beginning again, and so making the real and ordained end, completing the whole. It is the actual construction of the final fact. *And it is precisely the construction of a final fact that reason requires to come upon, or to have presented to it and to recognize, if it is to attain a satisfactory view of things, and if its system is to be complete.*

For reason, in its reading off of the facts of the world, with a view to the apprehension of a unified system of things, comes at last to a point at which it perceives (if its eyes be open) that the necessary facts are not all there to be read off. At any rate the last fact is lacking; and so the unity of things cannot be apprehended, because it does not in reality exist. Reason, for example, may, with its theories of evolution, pass beneath the surface of things and believe itself to have hit upon the underlying chain

of method whereby all that exists has come to be; but this by no means gives it the perfect unity it craves. A mere similarity of method and process all through is not unity at all, though it is true that the word "unity" is not infrequently used in the very loose sense implied. To reach that sort of unity is merely to discover that the programme of things has never been changed—and that is not enough. That kind of unity is like the unity reached by repeated striking of the same note on the keyboard of the piano. It is mere similarity of pattern; and you do not, by having a number of things exactly alike, make one whole. A unity in the pattern implies no unity of essential being. Reason demands, for its own satisfaction, a unity of a deeper and more vital kind. A real unity—the unity which reason, when it knows itself and its desires, calls for—is a unity vital and organic, a unity wherein the initial Being sends itself forth, passes through stage upon stage, becoming in a sense other than itself in the passing and yet remaining itself all the while, and at last returns upon itself, settles down upon itself, once more. What is demanded is a unity which is a self-contained, rounded whole. The entire process, though projected out of the initial Being, must be within the initial Being, too; and so far as there is separateness, it must be only such as is caused by the initial Being choosing to travel outside itself. There must be something more than a series of elements connected together in the same way: the elements of the series (it is by metaphor that one comes nearest to making the point clear) must have beneath them, so to say, a guide-rail from which they do not swerve, and which, however long may be its radius and however wide its sweep, curves back again to its starting-point, so that in the end the idea of separateness in the elements is lost in the idea of the fundamental Being which has sent them forth from itself, which has manifested itself through them, and which through the last of them brings all home once more. It is true that reason has sometimes contented itself with reaching what seemed to be a satisfactory theory of the method whereby the previous stages of things have been worked out, and when it has discovered a similarity of method throughout, has declared unity to be found. But if it read its own requirements aright, reason cannot be thus content. It cannot be satis-

fied with merely discovering how things have come to be. Things themselves (not simply the methods of their becoming) must be unified. What reason wants is to apprehend a unity vital and organic—to perceive how all that is has not only followed out an unchanging programme, but is all through actually the initial Being coming out from itself and returning home upon itself again.

This means that reason, taking up the process of things at the point it has reached in man, its last stage (its last stage for the present, that is), must not stop at accounting for that stage, but must apprehend also how that stage becomes, merges into, the really last stage—in other words, how life in man turns again to its source. Not till it apprehends this will a true unity be reached for thought. Reason must apprehend, not only the penultimate stage, as we called it before, but the ultimate. But this is precisely what thought, reason, cannot do, because the ultimate stage is not reached. In man, as thought discerns him, life is still as it were a loose thread, and is not bound back to the beginning of things again. No mere accounting for man puts this right. You may account for man, theorize as satisfactorily as you like as to how he came to be; but that is a very different thing from seeing everything, man included, as one whole. And when reason looks for this latter vision, it cannot attain it, because the wholeness of things is not worked out. Life, as man reveals it, may be traceable downward from its source; but life, in its human individualism, is not using its individualism in order to carry life on to a goal which is one with its source. The final fact, which reason wants to read off, that is, is not there for reason to read—and, not being there, must be made. Reason, having carried its reading off of the existing facts as far as possible, must confess that what is wanted now is the emergence of a new fact, of a new constructive process which shall continue and complete the unfinished process: reason itself leads us up to the point of seeing that something more—something which is not an exercise of reason, but an exercise of life—must take place if reason's own perfect work is to become possible; and in the end, reason has to watch and wait for something to happen rather than to stop at finding an explanation of what has happened already.

In order to obtain for thought the unity which we demand, we must first develop the real and final unity of life. Or, as previously said, it is the final fact of things, constructed or in process of construction, that reason requires to come upon or to have presented to it, if it is to reach a view of things in which it can rest. Reason itself calls to man, "*Be something more than you are—make the final fact—in order that I may write the last chapter of my book, and not be put to shame.*"

And in the mystical experience, according to our former interpretation of it, the final fact is in process of being made. Here life returns upon its source. Here the process of things, having got as far as man, is linked up into one whole as man climbs up into God. Through the mystical experience the completely unified system which reason insists upon having is brought about—not perceived but brought about. The mystical experience finishes, one may venture to say, the creative process, and carries things back to God. Mysticism, then, when it understands itself aright and explains itself truly, remains entirely reasonable just because it does not attempt to substitute itself for reason, but does what, according to reason, requires to be done. It supplies reason with the final fact, and, in doing this, justifies itself in reason's eyes. The mystical experience is reasonable, although not a process of reason, nor something put in place of a process of reason. It does not interpret the system of things—it completes it. And inasmuch as this completing of the system of things is precisely what reason waits for, mysticism links itself with reason in separating itself from reason and in realizing what its own particular mission is; and in speaking of "rational mysticism" we do but call the mystical experience by a title to which it has a perfectly valid claim.

IV

But, now, what of New Testament Christianity? If mysticism, rightly understanding itself, finds that it has become truly rational because it creates the ultimate fact which somewhere or other reason needs to come upon in order to make its own system complete, does it also find itself in line with the religion expounded and prescribed on the New Testament page?

We are proceeding throughout this paper, let it be remembered, upon the idea that if we begin from a revised apprehension of what mysticism in its essence really is, we may find ourselves started upon the road to that ultimate reconciliation of seeming incompatibles which we desire. In other words, the suggestion is that the moment mysticism gives a legitimate account of itself, mysticism moves toward reason and reason toward mysticism, mysticism toward New Testament Christianity and New Testament Christianity toward mysticism. The mutual movement of reason and mysticism, we have seen, is made. But does the other mutual movement begin? Do we find that our idea of New Testament Christianity makes anything like an automatic approach to clasp hands with our clarified and rectified idea of what the mystical experience really is?

An affirmative reply is surely the only one that can be given. If we set the mystical experience, as read above, side by side with the conception of the Christian experience given in the New Testament, it becomes immediately evident that these two are one. So soon as we obtain a right idea of mysticism, our idea of New Testament Christianity—if we come to the New Testament with receptive minds—tones itself up to meet it. When mysticism quits its mistaken self-interpretation and moves on to surer ground New Testament Christianity, in our conception of it, hoists an answering signal, and moves in its turn to meet mysticism there.

For let the phrases wherein the mystical experience was described be recalled. Mysticism is a climbing into God on the part of man, a descent into man on the part of God—that is the sum of them all. But if this be a right description of the mystical experience, it is also a right description of the experience declared in the New Testament to be religion's goal. It is true that the New Testament is largely concerned with the means whereby man may find his way from the lower stages of life up to this highest stage of all—with a self-revelation which God has given—with a work which God has wrought—with the manner in which that divine life wherewith man, moving upward, is to unite himself, has in Christ, moving downward, made offer to unite itself with man—with a faith through which man is to

render all these works and arrangements of God, so to call them, effective for his own self-union with God. But, all through, the ideal of a veritable union between man's life and God's (or between man's life and Christ's, which for the New Testament is the same thing, since the divine life, according to the New Testament, mediates itself to man in and through Christ, and moves down, as was just now said, to meet man's upward striving, so that oneness with Christ is oneness with God)—all through, that ideal of a veritable union between man's life and God's life or Christ's life is kept in view. And it is a union in the strictest sense—not a mere harmony, not an accommodation of attitude on the part of one to what the attitude of the other requires, but an actual organic oneness, a true linking of personality to personality and of soul to soul. That, and nothing less, is the New Testament ideal.

To show this in any detail would involve a catena of quotations that is impossible here. But for any one who goes open-mindedly to the reading of the New Testament (after all due allowance for the results of reasonable criticism has been made) its mystical call rings clear. It rings in the ministry of Jesus—in the indisputable fact that, according to the presentation of the four gospels, Synoptic and Johannine alike, it was always his whole personality he sought to impress upon the personality of his hearers, and the whole personality of his hearers, as distinct from their assenting minds, he sought to draw into his own. One may venture to speak of the mysticism of Jesus, not in the sense that he was himself climbing into the divine life, for he *was* the divine life, but in the sense that he set himself before men as the One into whom they were to climb. That Christ was in a manner egoistic—may one put it so?—indicates how mystical he meant men to be; for to that egoism of his only mysticism on the part of men could adequately or appropriately respond. In Paul, again, the mystical call rings clear—in Paul, to whom those who fear the language of mysticism so often fly for refuge and for arms. It is not to be denied that Paul spoke frequently of the *means* whereby the mystical experience was to be won—of the machinery, so to term it, which the wisdom and power of God had set at work in order to make the mystical experience possible for

mankind. But always it was "Christ *in* you," "you *in* Christ," and similar phrases that Paul employed to denote religion's goal; and for himself the aim was that it should be not he that lived, but Christ that lived in him; and he saw all the fulness of God in Christ, and, correlatively, in Christ saw also man made full. And this (unless we water down the words to a quite illegitimate extent) is mysticism undefiled. Indeed, the mystical experience of human life united to the life of God through union with Christ was for Paul so much the very essence of Christianity that he assumed it as such rather than argued it, and spoke of it, as it were, without any note of exclamation at the end of his phrase,—for which reason, it may be, we sometimes fail to be arrested as we ought. And so all through. A reading of the New Testament that is unprejudiced and open-eyed finds it the most mystical book in all the world. Theology may have missed the fact not seldom—and may have missed it, partly, because mysticism's wrong account of itself has failed to waken New Testament echoes as mysticism's right account of itself cannot fail to waken them. With a mysticism which understands itself mistakenly the New Testament has nothing to do; a mysticism which is merely a substitute for knowledge, and which repays reason's scorn with scorn, has no kinship with New Testament religion; it is at least on a different plane, since it is not with intellectual knowledge, or with substitutes for intellectual knowledge, that New Testament religion is concerned. But when mysticism begins to talk of a veritable movement of life into God's, the New Testament and mysticism find that they are speaking the same tongue. It is precisely of such a movement that the New Testament speaks. Mysticism makes the final fact—it is with the making of that same final fact that the New Testament deals throughout. Mysticism, in the sense of a real union between man's life and God's, is the atmosphere which pervades the New Testament from cover to cover; and when once, having heard mysticism expounding itself aright, we pass on to listen to New Testament Christianity expounding itself in its turn, we find that both come forth from the secret place with the same light upon their faces, and that the hearts of both beat as one.

But the matter must be pushed a little further before our task

is ended. "You have not yet done" (it might be said) "what at the outset you were going to do. You have not yet made any connection between the mystical experience and those great terms, with the ideas they connote, which recur most frequently in the New Testament account—between the mystical experience and the ideas of sin, salvation, faith, and the rest—between the mystical experience and evangelicalism, in short. Can this also be done? Is it possible for the religious man to feel that 'immersion of his entire being in the eternal tides' which was spoken of earlier, and at the same time to keep a hold upon all the apparatus of truth which gathers round the evangelical idea of reconciliation with God?"

On the true conception of mysticism, the connection is not only possible, but necessary. Mysticism not only permits the New Testament evangelicalism, but demands it. Interpreting itself truly, mysticism, we have seen, tenders itself not as a method of knowledge, but as a movement of life. But having thus corrected one mistake in the statement of its programme, mysticism is forced on inevitably to the correction of another; and the stress which it has often laid upon "contemplation" as the means of union with God must yield to something else. A "movement of life" means a real activity, and implies either something actually done by man's life for itself, or something actually done upon man's life from beyond itself, in order that the necessary movement may be made: if man is to climb into God, the problem at once becomes one which no method of "contemplation" can solve; and we have now to look for forces, whether acting from within the man or from without the man, whereby the "climbing" shall be pushed successfully through. And, taking the mere facts of the situation, a force acting from without the man—a reinforcement of man's power from beyond himself—is at the very least a thing to be desired. For, aiming at the mystical experience as described, we find ourselves with a retarding and depressing weight in our own nature to lift, with the divine life into which we want to climb so far away, and with a movement away from, rather than toward, the divine life always incipient, and often accentuated, within. These are mere matters of easily ascertainable fact, however exaggerated or distorted

some readings of them may have been. How, in face of facts like these, is the true mystical experience to be attained?

It is here that the evangelical side of New Testament Christianity comes in. It is this question that is answered when the New Testament speaks of all those "means"—as we called them—whereof the New Testament does speak in tones so persistent and so loud. When the New Testament talks of sin, it is talking of that movement away from the divine life which is going on within me. When it talks of salvation in Christ, it recognizes that there must be a force, either within me or without me, under whose impulsive power I am to climb into the life of God, and, because the force within me is baffled, points me to a force without. When it speaks of God reconciling me to himself by Christ's Cross, it is mindful of the distance between me the climber and God the goal—mindful, too, of my helplessness—and tells how the far-off God has in Christ stooped out of his distance, taking upon himself the pain of sacrifice involved in the stooping, to meet and touch me, to fetch me, to take me back again with him in Christ to his height. When it talks of faith, of believing and being saved, it talks of my response to that stooping down on God's part, calls me to identify myself with God in Christ in answer to that identification of himself with me which in Christ he has offered and (so far as from one side is possible) has actually made. That is, all the great terms which evangelical religion finds blazoned on the pages of the New Testament are concerned with the means whereby the mystical experience is to be won: they solve the problem which he who aspires to the mystical experience sets himself; and just in proportion to my understanding of the mystical experience, and to my desire for it, will be, not only my willingness to accept, but my passionate cry for, the New Testament presentation of the Christian faith. There is no fear that if I take the mystical experience for my goal, I shall sever myself from those things which students of the New Testament have held as cardinal through the ages. I shall, it is true, have a central conception (itself, however, a New Testament conception) round which all the New Testament ideas are to be grouped in order to receive their interpretation and in whose light they are to be read. Every doctrine which is given as a part

of the "machinery" for producing the movement of my life into God's must justify itself as a means to that end; and in my conception of religion's goal I shall have a test to which every conception of faith, atonement, and all else must submit. But I shall want faith, atonement, and all else—all the great old words and the realities they stand for—not less, but more. And this, not in any pale, eviscerated significance—not in any significance which implies juggling with the old words but not really putting them to fair use, but in a significance which leaves them with the full value rendered to them still. When I set myself to achieve a veritable union with God,—a union wherein the only initiative I keep is the initiative of surrender—a union wherein God becomes the actual dynamic source of all I am—a union wherein the separateness of my personality is used only to secure its unity with God's,—then I shall prize the more warmly all those ringing words and ideas of the New Testament which tell me how God himself, knowing all the obstacles and gloriously conquering them in his wisdom, love, and power, has made it possible for that union to be achieved. New Testament Christianity need have no fear that for him who understands the mystical experience aright one jot or tittle of the religious programme it inculcates will pass away. It is just in that programme that the needed secret will be found. And the religious man, longing for the warmth of the mystic's experience, yet wondering whether in seeking it he may not be divorcing himself from the primary essentials of a true Christian life, may set his misgivings at rest. For if he understand the mystical experience truly, he will through his pursuit of it come to see all the vaster significance in the great New Testament truths of sin, and faith, and incarnation, and Christ, and Cross.

So, in the end, under a right understanding of the mystical experience, we see mysticism moving toward reason and reason toward mysticism; and we see mysticism and New Testament Christianity at one. And, with mysticism thus linked with reason on the one hand and with New Testament Christianity on the other, our conception of New Testament Christianity (which through its link with mysticism becomes endowed with fresh depth) becomes, through mysticism's link with reason, linked

with reason in its turn, and endowed with fresh reasonableness, too. And so, to speak of "rational mysticism and New Testament Christianity" is to venture upon no union of incompatibles after all: it is to bring together three things whose voices blend, and on whose blended voices there comes the sound of a call we ought to hear. For the whole thing has a practical issue—which is this. Only in driving our religious life up to the mystical heights do we render it at the same time most reasonable and most in accord with the New Testament scheme; because only so do we make the "final fact" for which reason calls, and only so do we use the New Testament "means" for the realization of the New Testament ideal.